

Washington, D.C. – Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) supported, and the House unanimously passed, a Resolution recognizing the 15th Anniversary of the enactment of the Violence Against Women Act. The Act was described as “the greatest breakthrough in civil rights for women in nearly two decades” by the National Organization for Women when it passed in 1994. Its provisions remain in effect today, and continue to provide critical legal mechanisms to protect battered women.

“As the father of a young daughter and brother of six sisters, I believe we must continue our efforts to fight violence against women in all its forms. The Violence Against Women Act was one of Congress’s greatest legislative achievements in this area and I was proud to have the opportunity to honor its principles today,” said the Congressman.

This resolution recognizes the 15th anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act and supports the goals and ideals of the legislation. It recognizes the need to continue vigorous enforcement of the Act and similar programs to deter and prosecute crimes of violence against women.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) established federal penalties for interstate stalking or domestic abuse in cases where an abuser crossed a state line to injure or harass another, and strengthened existing penalties for repeat sexual offenders. VAWA called for pretrial detention in federal sex offense or child pornography felonies. Additionally, the Act authorized a number of different grant programs, such as STOP grants, aimed at training law enforcement officers and prosecutors to more effectively identify and respond to violent crimes against women, including those of sexual assault and domestic violence. These grants are administered by the U.S. Department of Justice.

VAWA emphasizes a coordinated community response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking; courts, law enforcement, prosecutors, victim services, and the private bar currently work together in a coordinated effort that had not previously existed on the state and local levels. VAWA also supports the work of community-based organizations that are engaged in work to end these abuses.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a*

*series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.*